

**USACHPPM**  
**HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE**

18 June 2004

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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## HOT TOPICS

### Childhood Shots Not Tied to Allergic Diseases

16 June - Reuters reported that allergic diseases have risen over the past few decades in developed countries, and some people have blamed this on the increase in mass immunizations that has occurred. However, that notion seems to be unfounded. UK researchers have shown that routine childhood [vaccinations](#) are not associated with an increased risk of asthma or eczema. The researchers did find a certain association between overall population rates of diphtheria, polio, pertussis and tetanus (DPPT) immunization and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination and the incidence of asthma and eczema. However, this affected only "a minority of children who rarely seek care" from a general practitioner, meaning they were less likely than the average child to have been given routine vaccinations. So, if anything, this suggests the opposite conclusion, that lack of immunization is tied to greater odds of allergic disease. [View Article](#)

### Memory Fails after Severe Stress

14 June – New Scientist reported people are woefully bad at recalling details of their own traumatic experiences. When military personnel were subjected to threatening behavior during mock interrogations, most failed to identify the questioner a day or so later, and many even got the gender wrong. The finding casts serious doubt on the reliability of victim testimonies in cases involving psychological trauma. Over 500 soldiers, sailors and pilots at "survival schools," three mock POW camps run by the US military, were studied. The subjects, whose mean age was 25, were being trained to withstand the mental and physical stresses of capture. After 48 hours without food or sleep, they were subjected to intense interrogation. Half of the subjects were physically threatened, and this caused them to show all the signs of intense physiological stress - very high heart rate and levels of adrenalin and cortisol, combined with plummeting sex hormones. Twenty-four hours after release from the camp, the subjects were asked to identify their interrogators. The performance of all groups was abysmal. Only 30 per cent could find the right person in a line-up, 34 per cent from a photo-spread and 49 per cent from sequential photos - though the clothing cue boosted correct identification to 66 per cent. Thirty people got the gender wrong, and those subjected to physical threats were the worst at recognizing their interrogator. [View Article](#)

### Mouth Rinse May Work Just as Well as Flossing

16 June - Reuters reported that people who don't floss their teeth may get the same benefit from regularly rinsing their mouth with the antiseptic Listerine. Ideally, people should brush, floss and use Listerine. In a recent survey of 300 dentists, 90 percent said that their patients do not floss every day, the recommended regimen to protect mouths from the plaque that can cause gum disease. Among 326 people who brushed and either flossed or rinsed with Listerine, Listerine-users showed the same improvements in plaque and gum inflammation called

gingivitis as flossers. All participants had mild to moderate [gingivitis](#) at the outset of the study. Researchers said that Listerine contains essential oils that get between teeth and kill the germs that brushing does not reach. Pfizer received approval from the American Dental Association to publicize the fact that Listerine may work as well as dental floss to consumers, and plans to begin with television advertisements. [View Article](#)

## Sleep Apnea Treatment Improves Heart Risks

16 June – Reuters reported that people who experience [sleep apnea](#), or brief episodes when breathing stops, are often treated with continuous positive airway pressure, CPAP, to help them breathe properly during the night. While rather cumbersome and inconvenient, the treatment is worth sticking to -- especially for people who have heart disease. Treatment of obstructive sleep apnea reduces cardiovascular events such as heart attacks or the need for heart surgery among people who already have coronary heart disease (CHD). Researchers compared rates of new cardiovascular events over a five-year period in 25 patients with CHD whose sleep apnea was treated and in 29 who refused treatment. CPAP was the treatment in 21 patients, while 4 underwent upper airway surgery. Six treated patients and 17 in the untreated group had at least one cardiovascular event during follow-up. Three heart-related deaths that occurred were all in the untreated group. [View Source](#)

## Study Finds Fruit Helps Ward off Vision Problems

14 June – Reuters reported eating fruit regularly earlier in life may help ward off macular degeneration, the leading cause of vision loss in older adults, a study said. But the report said there appeared to be no strong protective effect from vegetables, vitamins or carotenoids -- the compounds that make some fruits and vegetables red, orange or yellow -- as some earlier research had suggested. The study looked at data from 77,562 women and 40,866 men who were followed for 12 to 18 years as part of long-term studies tracking them for a variety of health issues. It found that both men and women who consumed three or more servings of unspecified fruit a day had a 36 percent decreased risk of developing macular degeneration. [View Article](#)

# Focus on Epidemiology

## Detection of *Bacillus anthracis* by Autonomous Detection Systems

4 June - Autonomous detection systems (ADSs) are under development to detect agents of biologic and chemical terror in the environment. These systems will eventually be able to detect biologic and chemical hazards reliably and provide approximate real-time alerts that an agent is present. One type of ADS that tests specifically for [anthrax](#) (*Bacillus anthracis*) is being deployed in hundreds of postal distribution centers across the United States. Identification of aerosolized *B. anthracis* spores in an air sample can facilitate prompt on-site decontamination of workers and subsequent administration of postexposure prophylaxis to prevent inhalational anthrax. Employers who deploy an ADS should develop detailed plans for responding to a positive signal. Responding to ADS detection of *B. anthracis* involves coordinating responses with community partners and should include drills and exercises with these partners. The report provides guidelines in the following six areas: 1) response and consequence management

planning, including the minimum components of a facility response plan; 2) immediate response and evacuation; 3) decontamination of potentially exposed workers to remove spores from clothing and skin and prevent introduction of B. anthracis into the worker's home and conveyances; 4) laboratory confirmation of an ADS signal; 5) steps for evaluating potentially contaminated environments; and 6) postexposure prophylaxis and follow-up. [View Report](#)

## Methods of Suicide among Persons Aged 10--19 Years --- United States

11 June – MMWR reported that in 2001, [suicide](#) was the third leading cause of death among persons aged 10--19 years (1). The most common method of suicide in this age group was by firearm (49%), followed by suffocation (mostly hanging) (38%) and poisoning (7%) (1). During 1992--2001, although the overall suicide rate among persons aged 10--19 years declined from 6.2 to 4.6 per 100,000 population (1), methods of suicide changed substantially. To characterize trends in suicide methods among persons in this age group, CDC analyzed data for persons living in the United States during 1992--2001. This report summarizes the results of that analysis, which indicated a substantial decline in suicides by firearm and an increase in suicides by suffocation in persons aged 10--14 and 15--19 years. Beginning in 1997, among persons aged 10--14 years, suffocation surpassed firearms as the most common suicide method. The decline in firearm suicides combined with the increase in suicides by suffocation suggests that changes have occurred in suicidal behavior among youths during the preceding decade. Public health officials should develop intervention strategies that address the challenges posed by these changes, including programs that integrate monitoring systems, etiologic research, and comprehensive prevention activities. [View Report](#)

## DoD-GEIS: Mortality Surveillance

11 June - Terrorist events in recent years have heightened awareness of the risk of terrorism involving unconventional agents including biologic and chemical weapons. Medical examiners and coroners (ME/Cs) are thought to be essential public health partners for terrorism preparedness and response. This week CDC published "[Medical Examiners, Coroners, and Biologic Terrorism: A Guidebook for Surveillance and Case Management.](#)" ME/Cs support both public health and public safety functions and investigate deaths that are sudden, suspicious, violent, unattended, and unexplained. Relevant autopsies and laboratory capability are essential for making organism-specific diagnoses in deaths caused by [biologic terrorism](#). Stated goals of the report are 1) help public health officials understand the role of ME/Cs in biologic terrorism surveillance and response efforts, and 2) provide ME/Cs with the detailed information required to build capacity for biologic terrorism preparedness in a public health context. It also provides background information regarding biologic terrorism, possible biologic agents, and the consequent diseases, autopsy procedures, and diagnostic tests (including a discussion of the Laboratory Response Network (LRN)) and a description of biosafety risks and standards for autopsy precautions. The report does not address DoD mortality surveillance: information on this program, a partnership between DoD-GEIS and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology is available at the GEIS website. The report also describes federal resources for ME/C preparedness and response activities and the limited support capacity of the federal Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team. This report, a joint collaboration between CDC and the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), describes the relationship between ME/Cs and public health departments, emergency management agencies, emergency operations centers, and the Incident Command System. *More information on bioterrorism and other "hot topics" is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#)*

***Other timely information can be found in:***

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## **USCENTCOM**

### **Death Toll from Toxic Iranian Homebrew Reaches 22**

16 June – ProMED reported that a toxic batch of homebrew alcohol has killed 22 people in southern Iran and put scores more in hospital. Alcohol is officially banned in the Islamic state but those determined to break the enforced sobriety can purchase smuggled imports on the black market or buy locally made spirits. "Some of them died after days of suffering in hospital," Hossein Ali Amiri, a judiciary official in the southern Fars province, told state television. Amiri said 93 people had been hospitalized after drinking the brew, which doctors suspect may have contained methanol, which is toxic. Five drinkers went blind, state media reported. Amiri said police had arrested 20 people suspected of distributing the moonshine in the city of Shiraz, capital of Fars Province, where dozens of people sought medical help on Saturday after drinking it. [View Article](#)

### **WHO reports 30 Ebola cases in Sudan**

11 June - CIDRAP News reported that the outbreak of [Ebola hemorrhagic fever](#) in southern Sudan had increased to 30 cases with seven deaths as of yesterday, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported today. The outbreak has grown slowly since it was reported in Yambio County of Western Equatoria province in May, according to WHO reports. The agency originally reported 19 cases with four deaths on 24 May. By 7 June officials said there were 28 cases with seven deaths. A total of 157 contacts of patients are being followed up, the WHO said. In addition, "intensive social mobilization activities are being carried out" to contain the outbreak. These include workshop for teachers, counseling for patients and their family members, and distribution of educational materials in schools and community centers. [View Source](#)

## **USEUCOM**

### **Botswana: Religious Sects Refuse Polio Vaccination**

14 June – IRIN News reported as Botswana gears up for the second round of its national [polio](#) immunization campaign, some religious groups are refusing to allow their children to be inoculated. The new round of anti-polio vaccinations, targeting 200,000 children less than five years of age is the result of a confirmed case of the disease in Ngami District in northern Botswana last month. The last recorded case of polio occurred 13 years ago. Some members of the Apostle Church of God, which is believed to have close to 50,000 followers across the

country, have vowed not to allow health authorities to immunize their children on religious grounds, saying that their members use neither traditional nor modern medicine because they believe illness can only be healed by prayer. Following resistance to the first round of polio vaccination last month, the government applied to the High Court, seeking an order to compel all parents or guardians of children under five to allow authorized health staff to perform the immunization. Any parent or guardian refusing to allow health personnel to immunize a child would be guilty of an offense in terms of the Public Health Regulations, which carries the penalty of a three-month jail sentence, a fine of Pula 500 (US \$105) or both. [View Article](#)

## Cases of Mumps are Still Increasing in Scotland

17 June – Evening Times Online reported that there were 515 confirmed cases of the disease for the first half of 2004, more than 50 times the rate over the same period last year. Suspected cases have reached 1086, against 82. Immunization epidemiologist Dr. Claire Bramley, of the Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health, warned the infection was showing no signs of slowing. Dr. Bramley said: "It's a huge outbreak. The spread of the infection is continuing to increase, not just in Glasgow but throughout the country." Mumps can cause partial deafness in extreme cases and develop into non-fatal viral meningitis. Dr. Bramley said although the disease was affecting the 13-25 age group, the hardest hit were 17 and 18-year-olds. "This generation was not vaccinated against mumps during their childhood because the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccination was not available then," she added. "Mumps is not a pleasant infection, but severe complications are rare." [View Article](#)

## Cattle to Be Branded to Control Diseases

11 June – AllAfrica.com reported the Mozambican government's National Livestock Directorate is preparing to brand cattle throughout the country as a means to control the movement of the animals and improve the management of epidemics. The deputy national director of livestock explained that branding cattle is the safest measure to control epidemics because the authorities will thus be able to identify the origin of animals in situations where restrictions have been imposed. He said that the authorities will be able to identify the province, the town, and even the owner of any particular head of cattle. Macamo said that priority will go to those areas that have been affected by foot-and-mouth disease, particularly along the border with Zimbabwe. [View Article](#)

## Mugabe Addresses AIDS Conference

16 June – VOA News reported that Zimbabwe's President, Robert Mugabe, has addressed the country's first national HIV/AIDS conference in Harare. In his address, President Mugabe spoke about the progress made in the fight against [HIV/AIDS](#). He applauded the recent launch of an anti-retroviral drug program, which he said can only reach a maximum of 10,000 people because of a lack of funds. "There is a need also to compliment expensive modern ARVs (anti-retroviral drugs) by finding a role for effective traditional medicine in AIDS care," Mr. Mugabe said. The president's announcement was welcomed by the president of the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association, who said his organization has tried for years to work with the Health Ministry to combat HIV/AIDS, but had met with stiff resistance. He said some traditional healers can ease the symptoms of AIDS but, like modern medicine, they have not come up with

a cure. President Mugabe also expressed his appreciation for the assistance Zimbabwe has received in the fight against AIDS from multilateral organizations of the United Nations. [View Article](#)

## Nigerian Youth Fighting AIDS by Tackling a New National Curriculum

Spring 2004 –The Ford Foundation’s office for West Africa, based in Lagos, makes grants to improve sexual and reproductive health among women and youth. This includes efforts to prevent the spread of [HIV/AIDS](#) and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as programs to fight discrimination and to help poor women and young people find jobs and earn a living. Foundation-funded research has also helped inform national initiatives, including the national curriculum on sexuality education. Across Africa’s most populous nation, young Nigerians have already paid a steep price for silence and misinformation. Young women fall prey to prostitution, domestic violence and quack abortionists. They are the most likely to die or to suffer painful complications from giving birth too young, in a country where many girls are sexually active before they reach 17. Adolescents of both sexes are the leading casualties of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, which is spreading here at an alarming rate. Infection rates soared from just 1.8 percent of Nigerians in 1991 to around 5 percent of Nigeria’s sexually active population by 2003—or about four million Nigerians. In the past few years, Nigeria has introduced a national sexuality education curriculum. Health professionals see the combination of the new curriculum and the youth outreach as a model of H.I.V. prevention. [View Article](#)

## Russia: High Level of Tick Exposure in Tyumenskaya

13 June – ProMED reported in the Tyumenskaya oblast of Russia (Siberian plain) a total of 5083 people have sought treatment for tick bites. So far, 128 people have been admitted to hospital suffering from [tick-borne encephalitis](#) and [Lyme disease](#), 29 of whom are children. During the past week 41 people were admitted to hospital: 8 are confirmed with tick-borne encephalitis and 21 people were confirmed with tick-borne borreliosis (Lyme disease). According to the Director of the State Epidemiological Surveillance Centre, people are submitting ticks for testing, and it has been established that 7 percent of ticks are carriers of tick-borne encephalitis virus and 3-4 percent are carriers of Lyme disease. In comparison with the same period in the years 2002 and 2003, these figures are 20 percent lower. Control of tick infestation is in progress. This year all hospitals in the south of Tyumenskaya oblast have been provided with adequate supplies of immunoglobulin, and up to 85 percent of the population has received vaccine. [View Article](#)

## Suspected Case of Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in Palermo

12 June – ProMED reported that fears are growing that there could be a new human case of mad cow disease [variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD)] diagnosed a few days ago in Palermo. Doctors in the D'Anna clinic, which specializes in nervous diseases, noticed signs of a variation of CJD in the clinic's training college. This syndrome is the human form of the neurological disease that is associated with eating meat from animals with mad cow disease [bovine spongiform encephalopathy]. The female patient was admitted to the neuro-psychiatric ward about 10 days ago and went home after doctors had carried out clinical tests because she didn't want any further tests. Now doctors are saying that other signs are in line with their fears. The results of an electroencephalogram of the 30-year-old woman were similar to other cases of the common version of the CJD, particularly the initial signs of the illness. They were also

similar to those found in the young woman from Menfi (also in Sicily), who died at the age of 27 in August 2003 in Milan's Besta hospital. [View Article](#)

## Zimbabwe Military Hit by HIV Scourge

11 June – AllAfrica.com reported Zimbabwe's military has been hard hit by the deadly [HIV/AIDS](#) epidemic, which has become the biggest cause of death among servicemen, a report supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has revealed. According to the Zimbabwe Human Development Report for 2003, 75% of Zimbabwean soldiers die of AIDS within a year of being discharged. The report said the security sector was severely affected by HIV/AIDS. The prevalence of HIV is higher than in the general population. "The nature of the staff recruitment and operations make the sector highly vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. The sector thrives on engaging the young and socially inexperienced," the report says. Zimbabwe has an estimated 1,820,000 people who are HIV-positive. The HIV infection rate is 24.6% and it is estimated that by the end of last year, 761,000 children would be orphaned by AIDS. [View Article](#)

## USNORTHCOM

### Alcohol Abuse Up, but Fewer Alcoholics

11 June – Reuters reported more Americans are abusing [alcohol](#) than in the 1990s, but fewer are technically alcoholics. U.S. government researchers found that the number of American adults who abuse alcohol or are alcohol dependent rose to 17.6 million or 8.46 percent of the population in 2001-2002 from 13.8 million or 7.41 percent of the population in 1991-1992. The researchers cannot say why heavy drinking is up. "The fact that alcohol disorder rates are highest among young adults underscores the need for concerted research on drinking patterns that initiate in adolescence," Dr. Ting-Kai Li, Director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, said. The NIAAA study defines alcohol abuse as causing a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home; interpersonal social and legal problems; and/or drinking in hazardous situations. Alcohol dependence, also known as alcoholism, is characterized by impaired control over drinking, compulsive drinking, preoccupation with drinking, tolerance to alcohol and/or withdrawal symptoms. Across the decade, the rate of alcohol abuse increased to 4.65 percent of the general population from 3.03 percent, while the rate of alcoholism fell to 3.81 percent of the general population from 4.38. [View Article](#)

### Army Sits On Chemical Attack Antidote

11 June – CBS News reported a New York City police department physician thinks she has found a promising antidote for emergency workers to use if terrorists launch a chemical weapons attack, but the federal government won't let the city buy it — even though the U.S. Army can. The product, Reactive Skin Decontamination Lotion, which was developed by the Canadian military years ago, won Food and Drug Administration approval in 2003 and is sold in other NATO countries for neutralizing sarin, mustard gas and other chemical agents. It is being tested by the Army. But the companies that make it aren't permitted to sell it or even advertise it to state and local governments in the United States. As described by the FDA at the time it

approved it for the Army in April 2003, a lotion-soaked sponge is packaged in a special foil pouch that people can carry, ready to rip open and wipe on any exposed skin as soon as possible after exposure to a chemical attack. The Army says it wants to do more testing on issues such as whether the lotion is safe to use with bleach, before it making it standard issue for its troops or letting police, firefighters and other first responders buy it. [View Article](#)

## Corvallis Maternity Ward Closes after Whooping Cough Outbreak

11 June – The Daily News reported that the maternity ward at a Corvallis, Oregon hospital is closed to everyone but newborns and their family members, after an outbreak of [whooping cough](#) in the community. There have been 110 reported cases of whooping cough so far in Benton County this year. That's a huge increase over 2003, when there were only five cases reported all year. The disease, also called pertussis, is especially dangerous to infants and pregnant women. Officials aren't sure what is causing the epidemic, said Eileen Marma, communicable disease nurse at county health department. For most people, whooping cough causes severe coughing fits that last for six to 10 weeks. It can cause serious complications such as pneumonia, seizures, severe ear infections, difficulty eating and dehydration. In one of every 250 people with the disease, the brain is affected. About 10 to 15 people die from whooping cough each year in the United States. [View Source](#)

## FDA Approves Generic Forms of Ciprofloxacin

14 June – CIDRAP reported that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first generic versions of ciprofloxacin (Cipro), the antibiotic that drew national attention when it was used after the mail-borne anthrax attacks in 2001. Thirteen generic versions of ciprofloxacin, also called cipro, won approval. The approvals followed the recent expiration of Bayer AG's exclusive right to distribute the drug, he said. Overall sales of ciprofloxacin totaled about \$1.1 billion in the 12 months that ended in July 2003. Thousands of postal workers took ciprofloxacin at the recommendation of federal health officials after someone mailed envelopes containing anthrax spores to several government and media offices in the fall of 2001. The attacks caused 22 illnesses, five of them fatal. [View Article](#)

## For U.S. Latinos, Shared Heritage Has an Impact on Health

9 June – PAHO reported Latinos living in the United States have poorer access to health care services yet enjoy longer life expectancy than other U.S. population groups. This “epidemiological paradox” is the focus of an article in the latest issue of Perspectives in Health, the magazine of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). As of 2002, there were 38.8 million Hispanics living in the United States, representing a 58 percent increase since 1990 and making them today the nation's largest minority. Census data also show that Latina women have a life expectancy of 83.7 years and Latino men, 77.2 years—compared with 75.1 and 68.4 for African Americans and 80.1 and 74.7 for non-Hispanic whites. Yet health surveys show they have less access to health care services (63 percent of working Latinos have no health insurance) and to state-of-the-art treatment. The reasons for this apparent paradox are complex, but René Rodríguez, chief of orthopedics at the Veterans' Hospital in Miami and president of the Interamerican College of Physicians and Surgeons, says the explanation is partly cultural. “The sense of family is what saves Latinos,” says Rodríguez. “Solid family ties are essential for preserving health. When someone of Hispanic origin gets sick, the whole family

shows up worried at the clinic or hospital. This support, this solidarity, is an essential part of Latino life." [View Article](#)

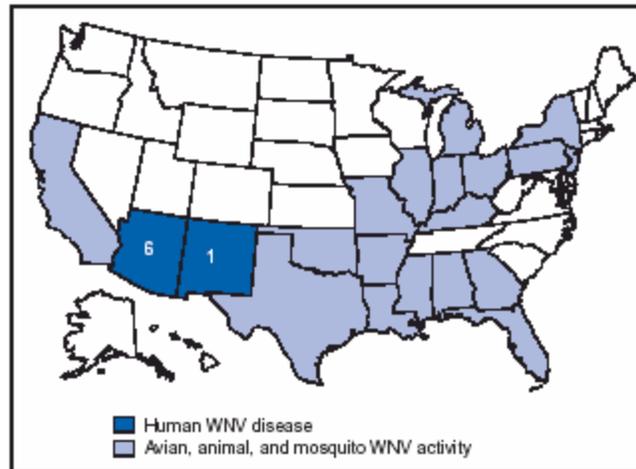
## Hospital Says Patients May Have Been Exposed to Viruses

16 June – Newsday reported that a Long Island hospital notified 177 patients that they may have been exposed to HIV or hepatitis during gastrointestinal endoscopies because it did not have documentation that the instruments used in the tests had been properly cleaned. North Shore University Hospital spokesman Terry Lynam said that doctors believed the risk of transmission was "virtually nonexistent" and that the letters were sent as a precautionary measure. Of the 177 who received letters, 86 have undergone tests and all have tested negative for either virus, Lynam said. He said another 10 patients were scheduled to undergo testing. The hospital said it did not have records that medical instruments used for upper endoscopies or colonoscopies were properly disinfected between procedures from April 28 to May 10. Workers apparently cleaned the tools manually but may have failed to test disinfectant levels in the water used for a machine cleaning, the hospital said. [View Source](#)

## West Nile Virus Activity --- United States, June 2--8, 2004

08 June - The MMWR reported that as of June 8, two states had reported a total of seven human cases of [West Nile virus](#) (WNV) illness to CDC through ArboNET. Six cases were reported from Arizona and one case from New Mexico (see Figure). Four (57%) of the cases occurred in males; the median age of patients was 53 years (range: 22--69 years), and the dates of onset of illness ranged from May 9 to June 1. In addition, during 2004, a total of 334 dead corvids and 55 other dead birds with WNV infection have been reported from 16 states, and seven WNV infections in horses have been reported from three states (Alabama, Arizona, and Texas). WNV seroconversions have been reported in 64 sentinel chicken flocks from four states (Arizona, California, Florida, and Louisiana), and 58 WNV-positive mosquito pools have been reported from six states (Arizona, California, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania). Additional information about national WNV activity is available from CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm> and at <http://westnilemaps.usgs.gov>.

FIGURE. Areas reporting West Nile virus (WNV) activity — United States, 2004\*



\* As of 3 a.m., Mountain Standard Time, June 8, 2004.

## USPACOM

### Australian Doctors Identify Deadly New Drug-resistant Superbug

7 June – The Utusan Express reported a deadly new [antibiotic-resistant](#) superbug related to golden staph has emerged in Australia causing at least one death, infecting 50 others and threatening many more. Medical authorities were alarmed because the virus was spreading within the community rather than being contracted in hospital as is generally the case with golden staphylococcus, a post-operative infection. Infectious disease experts said the virulent superbug was further evidence of the growing resistance by infections to antibiotics. Scientists believe the new infection is contracted through cuts or breaches of the skin, is highly virulent and can lead to death even among healthy young people. [View Article](#)

### Indonesian Maid Dies of Japanese Encephalitis in Hong Kong

10 June – Yahoo News reported an Indonesian maid has died of [Japanese encephalitis](#) in Hong Kong's first fatality from the mosquito-borne disease since 1996, the government said. Health Department official Thomas Tsang said the 29-year-old woman contracted the disease locally, but the source of infection wasn't immediately known. She suffered fever and drowsiness in late May before being admitted to a hospital. She died 7 June. Health workers are now canvassing the maid's neighborhood, drawing blood samples from residents for testing. [View Article](#)

### Snail Fever (Schistosomiasis) Outbreak Hits China

14 June – ABC News Online reported China has vowed stronger measures to contain the spread of [schistosomiasis](#) or snail fever, a potentially lethal parasitic worm carried by freshwater snails that attacks the blood and liver of humans. The Government hopes research will help

identify infection sources and develop new prevention methods. More than one million Chinese are infected with the disease, but given the current prevalence of the carrier snail, a total of 65 million Chinese are in danger of being infected. Last year alone, 843,000 Chinese were infected, most of them living in frequently flooded areas along the Yangtze River, where the carrier snail has an ideal habitat. By the 1980s, China thought that it had effectively controlled snail fever but a mixture of natural disasters and human error has facilitated its return. After a massive deluge along the Yangtze six years ago, the disease moved on to large, previously unaffected areas. The disease has been allowed to spread due to public ignorance and the erosion of China's healthcare system, the report said. Chronic patients, who account for most of those contracting the disease, can experience high fever, weakness of the limbs and severe stiffness of the joints. [View Article](#)

## USSOUTHCOM

### Brazil: District Reports another Suspected Death from Hantavirus Infection

11 June – ProMED reported a 64-year-old trader may be the fourth death due to [hantavirus](#) infection in the Federal District (DF). The patient died in the Regional Hospital of Asa North (HRAN) with the same symptoms as the other cases from May 2004: high fever, body pains and respiratory distress. The case also lived in Sao Sebastiao, the same locality where the other 3 cases lived. Teams from the Health Secretariat of the DF, the Adolfo Lutz Institute of Sao Paulo (IAL) and the Ministry of Health (MS) went to the city to capture mice. Blood and organs from the trapped mice will be analyzed to see whether hantavirus can be detected. Blood from this current case will also be tested to determine whether a hantavirus is responsible for his death. The first case of hantavirus infection of humans in Brazil was reported in 1993 in the interior of Sao Paulo. According to the Secretariat of Disease Surveillance of the Ministry of Health, since then there have been 353 cases of the disease reported, resulting in 161 deaths. The states that have reported the highest numbers of cases have been Parana, Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais and Santa Catarina (southern & south-eastern, less forested part of the country). [View Source](#)

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